

Military and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee

In person and virtually via Zoom

Meeting Minutes of May 12, 2026

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by the Vice Chair, Commander Beltran.

Subcommittee Members Present:

Manny Beltran, Vice Chair	Gary Vaughan	Paul Aguirre
David Lucier	Jonell Sullivan	Nicole LaSlavic
Les Presmyk	Keith Gray	Paul Johnson
Paula Pedene	Bob Dalpe	Sean Stoddard

Subcommittee Members Not Present:

Honorable Adrian Fontes, Chair	Erin Hannigan	Julia Gusse
Wanda Wright		

Non-Voting Members Not Present:

Pamela Rinesmith	Mary Kay Junis	Will Davis
James Lawton		

2. Discussion and possible action on meeting minutes for April 14, 2026.

MOTION: Vice-Chair called for approval of April 14, 2026, meeting minutes. Commander Beltran moved to approve the minutes; all members present voted “yes.” There was no discussion, and the motion carried.

3. Report from Executive Director Laura Terech

- a. Vote250.** Executive Director Laura Terech reported that the Secretary of State’s Office is continuing to promote a branded America250 Arizona voter registration toolkit.

Arizona Vote250 Outreach

b. Passport250. Passport250 promotion continues. Members who are interested in filming content at a military or Veterans location on the list are encouraged to reach out to the Executive Director to coordinate. [America250 AZ: Celebrate & Explore Pass](#)

c. TheirStory oral history project. The Executive Director discussed the TheirStory platform for collecting oral histories related to the Semiquincentennial. Flyers and promotional materials will be shared in the meeting follow-up email so members can help disseminate the opportunity. This initiative will allow people across Arizona to record and share their reflections on the 250th anniversary of the United States.

d. America Gives and America's Potluck Week of Service. An update was provided on the America's Potluck and America Gives initiatives, both of which aim to increase civic engagement and volunteerism leading into 2026. America's Potluck encourages communities to host neighborhood gatherings on July 5, while America Gives seeks to make 2026 a record-setting year for volunteer service. Plans are underway to support these efforts through social media campaigns, toolkits, and partnerships with community organizations and sponsors. Ideas such as donating 250 items or \$250 to local causes are being promoted. Additionally, a statewide Week of Service is being organized from July 5 through July 11, featuring volunteer opportunities at food banks and other community sites. Sign-up links will be shared as soon as they are available. The Commission will be reserving spots at St. Mary's Food Bank on Thursday, July 9, from 1-3pm, as well as Saturday, July 11, from 12pm-2pm.

e. Dear America, Love Arizona postcards. An update was provided on the postcard campaign, noting that submissions have arrived from schools and the traveling museum. The response has been strong, with volunteers spending several hours sorting the postcards, though the process is only about 40% complete. The postcards have been described as highly meaningful and engaging, offering personal reflections similar to "letters to Santa Claus." Distribution efforts are underway, with postcards being displayed at locations such as the Arizona Capitol Museum, the Phippen Gallery in Prescott, Pinal County sites, and various State Parks. Members were encouraged to request curated sets of completed postcards for display at their respective organizations.

4. **Discussion, updates, and possible action on projects and initiatives to engage military members, military families, and Veterans in the Semiquincentennial**

a. Promoting Operation Freedom March. Executive Director Terech provided an update on Operation Freedom March, a year-long initiative conducted in partnership with the Arizona Trail Association to engage Veterans, service members, families, and supporters in the Arizona America250 campaign. The program invites participants to

hike, ride, or horseback ride sections of the Arizona National Scenic Trail between July 4, 2025, and July 4, 2026, as a way to embody service and unity; further information is available at <https://aztrail.org/events/operation-freedom-march/>. The program will now be featured as a part of the Outdoors250 initiative with State Parks for additional promotion. [Outdoors250 | Arizona State Parks](#)

b. USS Arizona SSN803. Gary Vaughan noted that collection of flag grommets paused but has now resumed to help produce bells. Crewmen will each receive a bell. If members have grommets, Gary can pick them up or provide drop-off information.

c. Eagle Scout projects to support Veterans and military families. Several Scout groups have been actively working with Veterans organizations on a variety of service projects. Scouts have visited multiple locations to paint Purple Heart parking spaces for Veterans. Some groups constructed flag receptacle boxes to allow for the proper retirement of U.S. flags, while one group completed repairs to a wall and restriped a parking lot at an American Legion headquarters. In addition, Scouts cleaned ten motorized wheelchairs for Veterans; nine of those wheelchairs have already been distributed and one remains available.

Efforts are also underway to expand education around proper flag retirement. There is ongoing coordination with ABC15 News to provide clear instructions to the public on how to properly retire flags. Gary indicated he will connect with the group regarding potential guests related to this effort.

America250 activities are fully underway with the American Legion. The American Legion continues its long-standing tradition of hosting Boys State each year, which promotes civics and government education. Boys State is expected to have nearly 300 attendees and will take place at the University of Arizona in Tucson from May 31 through June 6. Girls State will be running concurrently. Gary is also working in partnership with the VFW to support related initiatives.

Veterans recognition was also discussed, including an upcoming Arizona Diamondbacks event. On Friday, May 22, the Diamondbacks will play the Rockies, with bleacher seating and a patio section reserved for Veterans. Veterans will be honored throughout the entire weekend, and up to 500 seats are available for this event.

d. HAV Veterans Business Summit, July 23, 2026, from 7:30am – 12pm at the BBB in Phoenix. Paula Pedene thanked the Secretary for attending the recent Veterans Forum and provided an overview of the upcoming program. The event will be a half-day program held at the Better Business Bureau and will conclude with a keynote address on balancing career and family. The program will also offer microgrants to organizations that are Veteran-owned businesses, Veterans employee resource groups, or Veterans affinity groups. Paula noted that anyone interested in joining the planning committee

should contact her. Mentors will be assigned to each attendee, and there will be tabling opportunities available for organizations that would like to share resources.

- e. **HAV Honor Our Heroes Grand Marshals Campaign, July.** The nomination process for Veterans to serve as Grand Marshals in the parade will open online shortly after July 4. Approximately 80 applications are typically received, representing Veterans from each conflict from World War II to the present day. Each selected Veteran will be accompanied by the individual who nominated them, who will participate alongside them in all related events and the parade. Paula will distribute the nomination link once it becomes available.
- f. **HAV High School essay competition, August.** The HAV High School essay competition will take place in August as part of an effort to help students better understand and reflect on the sacrifices made by members of the military. This year's theme, "*250 Years of Freedom, 30 Years of Honor,*" highlights both the nation's 250th anniversary and the 30th anniversary of the parade.
- g. **HAV 9/11 Tattered Flag event with Scottsdale Fire at the Scottsdale Field House, September 11, 2026, 7:30 am – 9am.** <https://honoringamericasveterans.org/tattered-flag-project/> The HAV 9/11 Tattered Flag event will be held in partnership with the Scottsdale Fire Department at the Scottsdale Field House on September 11, 2026, from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. This breakfast event is already promoted on the organization's website, featuring a keynote address by the Admiral who served as the Public Information Officer at the Pentagon during 9/11. The program includes a flag retirement ceremony as part of the Tattered Flag Project, with flags collected from designated drop-off sites. It was requested that the Secretary participate by placing the first flag into the incinerator during the ceremony.
- h. **11/11 HAV Veterans Day Parade.** The HAV Veterans Day Parade will take place on November 11 and will continue as the organization's traditional parade, incorporating this year's theme, "*250 Years of Freedom, 30 Years of Honor.*" At the request of the City of Phoenix, the parade route will be adjusted, with the proposed new route running south on 3rd Street from Indian School Road to McDowell Road. Organizers are working to finalize the updated route.
- i. **HAV Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration, December 5, 2026, Wesley Bolin Plaza at 10:55am.** The HAV Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration will take place on December 5, 2026, at Wesley Bolin Plaza beginning at 10:55 a.m. The program will feature a keynote address from the recently retired historian of the Pearl Harbor Memorial. Organizers noted that additional support is welcome to continue growing the event and encouraged interested individuals to contact Paula. They also emphasized a need for volunteers.

5. Call to the Public

No comments were received from members of the public.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:33 a.m.

DRAFT